NEWS ANALYSIS 1-0355 MARCH 12, 1976
RUSSELL DYBVIK

U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS: THE VITAL MARGIN

ANNCR: THE AMERICAN SECRETARIES OF STATE AND DEFENSE THIS WEEK HAVE HAD INTERVIEWS PUBLISHED WHICH CAST A NEW LIGHT ON THE UNITED STATES RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. V.O.A. NEWS ANALYST RUSSELL DYBVIK HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS:

VOICE: DEFENSE SECRETARY DONALD RUMSFELD TOLD THE MAGAZINE "U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT" THAT IT WAS "DEAD WRONG" TO ASSUME DETENTE MEANS THE RUSSIANS ARE OUR FRIENDS AND WE CAN TRUST THEM... SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER TOLD THE SAME MAGAZINE THAT POLICY TOWARD MOSCOW REMAINS UNCHANGED, AND IS N O T BASED ON THE PROPOSITION THAT THE SOVIETS ARE TO BE TRUSTED.

BOTH INTERVIEWS CAME SHORTLY AFTER PRESIDENT FORD'S ANNOUNCEMENT IN A TELEVISION INTERVIEW THAT HE IS ABANDONING THE USE OF THE WORD "DETENTE" -- PREFERRING INSTEAD TO USE THE PHRASE PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH. THERE ARE SOME -- INDEED SOME HAVE ALREADY DONE SO -- WHO WILL CLAIM THIS REPRESENTS A CHANGE IN BASIC AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. BUT IT IS N O T. EVEN MOSCOW AGREES THAT IS IS N O T. A COMMENTARY IN THE SOVIET FOREIGN AFFAIRS WEEKLY "NEW TIMES" NOTES THAT "SOBER OBSERVERS ARE N O T INCLINED TO DRAMATIZE WHAT WAS SAID IN A PRE-ELECTION FEVER IN A TELEVISION INTERVIEW." AND, IT CONTINUES, "REJECTING THE WORD IS N O T THE SAME AS REJECTING THE POLITICAL COURSE."

THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE WORD "DETENTE" -- AND WHAT SOME AMERICANS THINK IT MEANS -- HAS BECOME A POLITICAL ISSUE IN THIS, A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR. (OPT) SEVERAL DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, AND MISTER FORD'S REPUBLICAN CHALLENGER, RONALD REAGAN, HAVE CHARGED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE UNITED STATES THROUGH DETENTE. (END OPT)

FROM THE OUTSET, DETENTE HAS MEANT A MUTUAL EFFORT TO RELAX TENSIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW -- NOTHING MORE. THE UNITED STATES -- AND ALL OF THE WESTERN ALLIES -- HAVE ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT DETENTE MUST BE PURSUED FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH. IF ANYTHING, WHAT HAS TRANSPIRED IS A RESTATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

IF DETENTE HAS HELPED FOSTER MUTUAL AGREEMENTS, THAT IS GOOD. BUT DETENTE COMPELS N O ONE TO SIGN AGREEMENTS THAT RUN CONTRARY TO NATIONAL INTEREST. AND MOSCOW MAINTAINS THAT A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS DOES N O T MEAN AN END TO THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE BETWEEN COMMUNISM AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES AND DOES NOT EXCLUDE SUPPORT FOR WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION.

(OPT) THE SOVIET MAGAZINE "NEW TIMES" NOTES THAT THERE ARE N O DOUBTS ABOUT WHAT THE WORD DETENTE STANDS FOR. IN ITS WORDS: "BEHIND (DETENTE) ARE YEARS OF CHANGE MARKING THE DEPARTURE FROM THE 'COLD WAR' AND HOSTILE CONFRONTATION...DOZENS OF AGREEMENTS AND ACCORDS DECISIVELY NORMALIZING RELATIONS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST -- AND N O T LEAST, BETWEEN THE U.S.S.R. AND U.S.A." (END OPT)

SECRETARY RUMSFELD EMPHASIZES THAT "THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST BE WISE ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT THE REASON WE ARE AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE WITH THE SOVIET UNION IS BECAUSE WE ARE MILITARILY STRONG." AND HE SAYS AMERICANS MUST REMAIN VIGILANT -- THE CAPABILITIES OF POTENTIAL ADVERSARIES MUST BE GIVEN THE CLOSEST ATTENTION, BECAUSE INTENTIONS CAN CHANGE OVERNIGHT. AT THE SAME TIME, SECRETARY KISSINGER ASKS HIS CRITICS TO IDENTIFY THE NEGOTIATIONS IN WHICH WASHINGTON HAS ALLEGEDLY GIVEN A UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE TO MOSCOW.

SECRETARY KISSINGER PUT THE PROBLEM INTO PERSPECTIVE IN A RECENT SPEECH: TODAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY, HE SAID, WE FACE THE STARK REALITY THAT THE CHALLENGE IS UNENDING; THAT THERE IS N O EASY AND SURELY N O FINAL ANSWER; THAT THERE ARE N O AUTOMATIC SOLUTIONS. IT IS THAT REALITY, RATHER THAN DISTRUST OF SOVIET INTENTIONS, WHICH SECRETARIES RUMSFELD AND KISSINGER -- AND CERTAINLY PRESIDENT FORD -- HAVE BEEN EMPHASIZING.

JS/END